

Reston Association Covenant's Committee Meeting

October 19, 2016

Remarks by Residents of Trails Edge Lane

1. Amanda Staudt, 1565 Trails Edge Lane

My name is Amanda Staudt and I live at 1565 Trails Edge Lane with my husband and our three children. I'm here this evening, along with a number of my neighbors, to discuss the issue of an AirBnB business that was opened on our street earlier this year.

Let me start by sharing some details about our neighborhood. Trails Edge Lane is a cul de sac with 17 houses. The homes are all single-family residences with 4-5 bedrooms. Our street is the quintessential family neighborhood, with children regularly biking in the street and frequent social events with the neighbors. Until recently, every single house on the block has been owned by families that are raising children, are empty-nesters whose children grew up here, or moved here with the intent to raise a family.

Earlier this year, the home at 1561 Trails Edge Lane was purchased and the owner immediately began offering individual rooms for nightly rentals on AirBnB. He rents as many as four rooms at a time for as low as \$35/night. To the best that we can tell, dozens of individuals have stayed in the home in the last 9 months, as evidenced by the number of reviews posted on-line (currently 35) and the number of cars present in the driveway and on the street (typically 2-4 additional vehicles).

This situation has been incredibly upsetting. This neighborhood is a community that we have worked hard to build and maintain. We have a book club that has met monthly for 15 years. Parties are hosted annually at Christmas, Halloween, Easter, and sometimes St. Patrick's Day. We typically line the entire street with luminaria at Christmas. Informal gatherings while our children play outside are frequent, often morphing into pizza dinners on the driveway.

Our children attend the local schools, play on the local sports teams, swim together at the local pool, and perform in the local theater. Our parents volunteer as coaches, on the PTA, as refs, and youth group leaders. When there is a snow storm, we help each other shovel out. We rely on our "village" to help keep our children safe. We know all our neighbors so that they can be our eyes and ears. Many of us moved here expressly for these reasons.

Now, rather than a family that contributes to our community, we have a business that invites transient individuals to our neighborhood. It is particularly galling that the homeowner advertises the wonderful aspects of our community as features of the rental property: "My neighbors are the friendliest people you could find anywhere. We look out for each other, and as a result, this is a safe, quiet, and relaxing place to be." And yet he has done nothing to build this community and does nothing to sustain

it. He is profiting off of our investments and our shared covenant, while he is eroding the very fabric of our community.

As residents, we all agree to follow the bylaws that are intended to nurture the spirit of Reston. But allowing homeowners to open what amounts to a hotel on a residential street flies in the face of that spirit. Reston should take a clear stance that operating hotel-like businesses in a family-oriented residential neighborhood is not in the best interest of our community.

2. Lincoln Porter, 1560 Trails Edge Lane

Good evening members of the committee, my name is Lincoln Porter and my wife and I live at 1560 Trails Edge Lane, directly across from the self-described “bed and breakfast”. As a relative newcomer to the neighborhood I would like to give you my perspective on the situation as former homebuyer and Reston transplant. When Sheila and I were house hunting in the summer and fall of 2014 we looked at Reston because of the location, pricing, amenities, etc but most of all because we intended on starting a family and the community focused, family friendly values of Reston were very attractive.

We closed on our house in September 2014 and we quickly found out that not only did we choose the right place in Reston but we lucked into an amazing group of warm and friendly neighbors. We were welcomed into the fold right away with a fruit basket and a Trails Edge Lane address book.

Neighborhood get togethers were common, the adults gathering in someone’s driveway while the kids ran around going from house to house as they pleased. Lawn decorations are passed out before holidays, kids walk to the pool at the end of the street on their own, etc. All in all, an idyllic, old fashioned sort of neighborhood vibe.

We invited the BnB’s owner to join the neighborhood after he moved in but his business model does not include socializing with the scenery. He rejected our attempts to discuss his goals and find a middle ground and now lives in the basement while opening up the rest of his five bedroom house and our street to the internet. The room looking across my front yard is \$15 more per night for the view.

After the BnB opened in January 2016 it immediately put a chill across the street. Sheila and I are expecting our first child in January and now we find ourselves in the unexpected position of raising our son in a different neighborhood than we had intended. Not in the cul-de-sac we bought into, where the only people we see are the neighbors we already know and trust, but across from a craigslist flophouse where the rooms are sold by the night and we have no idea who owns that beat up Camry from Florida parked in front of our house. The very nature of such enterprises is to remove them from the surrounding community and permanently reduce the number of families in Reston. You fine people are volunteers for your positions on this committee so you must take Reston and its values seriously. I ask you to imagine such a situation across the street from you and your family and if it is at all reflective of those values and an acceptable use of the property.

As I opened with, as a newcomer to the neighborhood, had this BnB been in operation and had we known of it, there is no way we would have bought our house. The reason for moving and starting a family on a dead end street was to have that safe home base where we can let our guard down and let our children play outside, surrounded by people we know and trust. Our guard is up all the time on TEL and it has changed the nature of the neighborhood as Amanda has indicated and Patrick and Andy will elaborate on. I ask you to restore our faith in Reston and restore our broken sense of community. Thank you for your attention. I yield the remainder of my time to Patrick and Andy.

3. Patrick Connelly, 1559 Trails Edge Lane

Hello. My name is Patrick Connelly and I live at 1559 Trails Edge Lane with my wife and our three young sons.

I agree with Amanda and Lincoln's earlier comments about the importance of preserving our community and its values. I would like to highlight another area of concern regarding our neighbor's hotel-like business, which is its associated traffic and parking safety risks.

As previously mentioned, our neighbor's bed and breakfast rents up to four rooms on any given night, and these renters are constantly changing. With this high volume of transient renters comes a new stream of commercial traffic. And this significant increase in traffic by drivers unfamiliar with the neighborhood means a significant increase in risk to our children.

One of the draws of living on a cul-de-sac is that children can play outside at a relatively lower risk. People who live on the street and their visitors are well aware of the large number of children who live on Trails Edge, ranging in age from a few months to high schoolers, and they drive accordingly. When I drive down the street, I am on the lookout for children biking, skating, playing ball, or in the case of my young boys, perhaps just running around in circles. I know my neighbors exhibit the same caution. I am thankful we know and care about each other's families. It gives us an even greater awareness and accountability to drive slowly and carefully. However, with transient renters, we lose this safety benefit as there is no built-in community awareness and subsequent cautionary driving.

These traffic and parking safety concerns are more than hypothetical. There have been several occasions of the B&B renters speeding on the street, parking poorly or in the wrong direction, and even parking in front of the fire hydrant. Any of these actions could easily result in damage to property, or far worse, to our children.

This sense of a safe environment was a significant factor when my family decided to move to Trails Edge. It is sad and troubling to see the neighborhood's safety compromised. This hotel-like business activity has truly negatively impacted and changed ways in which we live and let our children play.

I will close with a final comment: these business-related traffic and parking risks are not only unsafe and inappropriate on a residential street but they are also completely addressable and avoidable. The simple solution: do not allow a hotel-like business to operate on a residential street.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

4. Andy Hoskins, 1567 Trails Edge Lane

April 2016

On Thursday Apr 13th my daughter was mowing the lawn of a neighbor to earn extra money. It was around 3:15 in the afternoon when she was approached by an unknown man approximately 40 years old who attempted to engage her in conversation. He made her feel very uncomfortable. He walked away then came back about 20 minutes later and attempted to engage her again. She immediately moved away from him and called home. She then quickly walked back to our house.

The stranger was later seen entering the residence of 1561 Trails Edge Lane.

Mon Apr 18, (right after school) – this same stranger approached another teenage female in the afternoon. He appeared in front of her car. The female felt unsafe so she locked herself in her car until after the stranger left.

Police report is filed regarding incident occurring on Thur Apr 13.

Mon Apr 18 (evening) – Myself and Mr. Willson approached owner of 1571. Ask who the guy is, why he's there, etc. I ask for a specific name but the owner would not cooperate and provide any information.

Tue Apr 19 – Kevin, the owner of 1561, comes to our house in evening. Let's us know he asked stranger to leave. Says he was told not to return.

Fast forward to May

Wed May 18 – Teenage female that felt trapped in her car and Ms. Connelly, both residents, see the stranger again walking up and down the street. Both notice him right away. This sends panic through the neighborhood again, parents begin texting one another, leave work, etc. Non-emergency police number is called. Police sit at end of cul-de-sac for a bit of time then and come speak with the Ms. Miller, a resident of 1567. Police are completely unaware of homeowners operating this type of business. Both are greatly surprised and concerned. Another police report is filed by Katie C and Nancy W regarding sighting.

Fast forward to July

July 3, 3:10p My daughter is approached and followed by stranger at YMCA in Reston. Teenage female calls her parents to let them know she has been followed again. We go pick her up.

Non-emergency police called. They take a report at YMCA. They also visit resident of AirBnB owner and ask for information regarding individual. He gives what he thinks is his first name and last name initial.

He gives no other info. Again, Police officer has no idea this type of rental is occurring in residential neighborhoods. Officer is very concerned and thinks safety is being compromised.

Impacts on our family

The result of having this B&B in our neighborhood is that my daughter was put a great danger and has lost her sense of personal safety in her home, in her neighborhood, and out in the greater community. Because of this situation we have switch gyms and now have a security system with camera at our home. Each month, as we pay for these items, I am reminded that the sense of comfort that once was and will likely never be returned.

Our neighborhood is now caught in what I believe is a numbers game with regard to safety and it is a direct consequence of the B&B. The situation described above took but a few short month to occur. How long will it be before the next event occurs and will it be worse? No one knows the answers to those to the aspect but all of us feel it is just a matter of time before something does occur. Please consider this and thanks for your time.